



The Perfection of Interpreting by Non-Linguist Interpreters



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Abstract

An interpreter is a person who converts a thought or expression in a source language into an expression with a comparable meaning in a target language in real time. The function of interpreters is to convey every semantic element (tone and register) and every intention and feeling of the message that the source-language speaker is directing to target-language recipients. Interpreting (oral translation) is not an easy job. In written translation, a translator has time to consider and revise each word and sentence before delivering their product to the client. While an interpreter's goal is to achieve total accuracy at all times, details of the original (source) speech can be missed and interpreters can ask for clarification from the speaker. This paper deals with the perfection of interpreting by non-linguist interpreters in Bhagavad Gita class in Sri Jaganath Gauranga Temple in Denpasar, and it has been presented in 2ndTranscon (International Translation Conference) in Jakarta but hasn't been published yet. There are some interpreters at the temple that have no special background knowledge about linguistics, especially translation/interpreting, but they can deliver the message from the source language (SL) English into the Target Language (TL) Indonesian perfectly. The cross-culture understanding that they have and their knowledge background about the text (Bhagavad Gita) play an important role in this case. The interpreters have been interviewed for the purpose of this paper to find out the factors that affect the perfection of interpreting for non-linguist interpreters.

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1. Introduction

Bhagavad Gita is also known as *Gītōpaniṣad* is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important *Upaniṣads* in Vedic literature. *Bhagavad Gita* is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Lord Krishna. The purpose of *Bhagavad Gita* is to deliver mankind from the nescience of material existence. Every man is in difficulty in so many ways. Every one of us is full of anxieties because of this material existence. The subject of the *Bhagavad Gita* entails the comprehension of five basic truths, namely *Isvara* (God), *Jiva* (jiwa), *Prakṛti* (material nature), *kala* (time), and *karma* (activity) (Prabhupada, 1989:7). The book

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Bhagavad Gita is learnt in the temple named Sri Sri Jaganath Gaurangga in Denpasar in a class which is called *Bhagavad Gita* class. It is regularly conducted in that temple and often delivered by English speaking presenters. In this case, since not all people who attend the class can understand English, the presence of interpreters becomes very essential in order to translate the message into Indonesian.

The interpreters who interpret in this temple have no special background knowledge about linguistics, especially translation or interpreting. Realizing that the work of interpreting needs more concerns and higher speed of transferring the meaning from the source language /SL (English) into the target language /TL (Indonesian) rather than written translation, it's so amazing that all the non-linguist interpreters in this *Bhagavad Gita* class are always able to interpret the text very well, and convey every intention and feeling of the message that the source-language speaker is directing to target-language recipients perfectly.

In connection with the ability of the interpreters under study, there are some problems of interest to be discussed pertaining to the success of interpreting in *Bhagavad Gita* classes. The problems under concern are as follows: (1). What interpreting modus is applied in *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Jagannath Gauranga temple in Denpasar? (2). What factors do affect the perfection of interpreting by non-linguist interpreters in the *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Jagannath Gauranga temple in Denpasar?

Theoretical Background

Pochhacker (2004) describes that interpreting is an activity consisting (mainly) in the production of utterances (text) which are presumed to have similar meaning and/or effect as the previous existing utterances in another language and culture. Nida and Taber (1974) state that translating consists in reproducing in the TL the closest natural equivalent of the SL message, first in terms of meaning, and secondly in terms of style (cf. Catford, 1965:20). In relation to this notion of translation, they further add that translating must aim primarily at "reproducing the message". And in reproducing the message, the translator/interpreter must make a good grammatical and lexical adjustments. However, since no two languages are identical, there can never be a fully exact translation.

The above definitions of translation emphasize that translation is a process of transferring 'meaning' of the source language, not of its 'form'. Therefore, a translator/ interpreter should be able not only to identify and understand the meaning in general but also the types of meaning in the text. It should also be important to realize that meanings can be signaled either by linguistic features or by extra-linguistic features and normally by both.

Nida (in Venuti (ed.): 2000) states that there are fundamentally two types of equivalence; *formal equivalence* (F-E) and *dynamic equivalence* (D-E). Formal equivalence is oriented to the form and content of the source language. In this kind of translation, the translator wants to reproduce as closely and meaningfully as possible the form and content of the source language. An F-E translation is basically source-oriented, that is, it is designed to reveal as much as possible the form and content of the original message. F-E translation usually attempts to reproduce several formal elements: grammatical units, consistency in word usage, and meanings in terms of the source text. This translation also normally attempts not to make adjustments in idioms, but rather to produce such expressions more or less literally.

Dynamic equivalence is oriented to the complete naturalness of expression, in which the translator/interpreter is not so concerned with matching the receptor language message with the source language message, but with dynamic relationship, namely the relationship between the receptor and the message which should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptor and the message.

To define a dynamic equivalence is to describe it as a process to produce in the target language "the closest natural equivalent to the source language message". This definition carries three very important terms, namely:

- a) *equivalent*, which points toward the source language message (in which the original message should be given its proper equivalent).
- b) *natural*, which points toward the receptor language (the form of the translation should be natural to the receptor language reader).
- c) *closest*, which binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of approximation (since translation cannot be identical with the original so that it should be as closest as possible to the original).

Mac Lachlan and Reid (1994) explain the importance of framing in any acts of interpretation. They say that no communication can take place without interpretation, and no interpretation can take place without framing. Framing is a way of understanding which is always involved in the interpretation of a text. In interpreting the meaning of a text, readers automatically draw upon their everyday knowledge which is stored and organized in their memory which is called cognitive frame. Understanding even very simple texts involves the activation of background knowledge.

MacLachlan and Reid propose four kinds of framing, namely *extratextual*, *intratextual*, *intertextual* and *circumtextual framing*. *Extratextual framing* occurs when readers read a text and they draw on their accumulated knowledge of the world, both experiential and textually mediated. This activity may include, among other things, a particular sequence of events to some stereotypical script as well as provisionally assigning it to a particular text-type or genre. *Intratextual framing* happens when readers pay attention to the way in which the flow of words within (*intra*) the text is affected by sub-divisional or other internal framing devices. *Intertextual framing* relates one text or text-type to another. It links the text being faced by readers with a certain kind of theoretical discourse. *Circumneutral framing* is framing in which readers are interpreting a text by paying attention to its material presentation, and location in space. For example, the title of the book and the presence of the references, a bibliography, and an index, as well as the kind of bookshop where it is sold, all contribute to the way readers interpret the information it contains.

2. Research Methods

Translation study is an applied linguistic analysis that includes various perspectives in its study, namely text genre, and field that are translated (literary works and scientific text). Translation is divided into two types: the translation of written text and the translation of oral text/interpreting (Pochhacker, 2004).

From the communication perspective, translation can be understood as the product of language use, both written translation, and interpreting. Interpreting study in *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Jaganath Gaurangga Temple is a qualitative field research. The choice of a qualitative approach in this paper is based on theoretical and technical consideration and translation phenomenon.

In qualitative research, a researcher uses most of the time in collecting data directly and the data collection is really based on subject perspective being researched (Sutopo, 2002). This characteristic is in accordance with the nature of interpreting study which is field research with the natural phenomenon as it is in the field toward the object of interpreting research in *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Jaganath Gaurangga Temple.

The data from this research are primary data which were recorded from the source naturally (natural setting) in the process of interpreting in *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Sri Jaganath Gaurangga Temple. This temple is chosen as the location of the research because there is *Bhagavad Gita* class delivered regularly by an English speaking presenter accompanied by an interpreter.

3. Results and Analysis

Interpreting converts an oral message into another oral language. It is an orally delivered message at a conference or a meeting from a source language into a target language, performed at the presence of the participants (Weber, 1984). Interpreting (oral translation) covers three basic modus: liaison, consecutive, and simultaneous. In liaison interpreting, the focus of the interpreter is maintaining the continuity of exchange of the message of the participants in the communication. In consecutive interpreting, the focus of the transfer comes after the SL message has been delivered, and it tends to concentrate on the information relevant to the text structure and context. In simultaneous interpreting, the transfer of the message of the SL to the TL is conducted at more or less at the same time. (Hatim, 1996).

Concerning the interpreting modus above, consecutive interpreting is applied in the *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Sri Jaganath Gaurangga Temple in Denpasar under study. In interpreting, the transfer of the SL message to the TL message is conducted immediately after the SL is delivered (almost at the same time). The stretch of time given to the interpreter is very short, so the interpreter should bear in mind the topic of the subject that is going to be interpreted, who are involved in the communication and the context of a situation where the communication takes place. After interviewing the interpreters, there are two factors that affect the perfection of their interpreting in *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Sri Jaganath Gaurangga temple in Denpasar, namely the interpreters' background knowledge of the text being interpreted, that is to say, *Bhagavad Gita* and their cross-culture understanding of both SL and TL cultures.

The two factors mentioned above, are really relevant to the importance of framing in any acts of interpretation. No communication can take place without interpretation, and no interpretation can take place without framing. Framing is a way of understanding which is always involved in the interpretation of a text. In interpreting the meaning of a text, readers automatically draw upon their everyday knowledge which is stored and organized in their memory which is called cognitive frame. Understanding even very simple texts involves the activation of background knowledge

(MacLachlan and Reid, 1994). The background knowledge of the interpreters about the *Bhagavad Gita* which is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important *Upaniṣads* in Vedic literature, set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Lord Krishna, with the purpose of delivering mankind from the nescience of material existence, and entails the comprehension of five basic truths, namely *Ishvara* (God), *Jiva* (jiwa), *Prakṛti* (material nature), *kāla* (time), and *karma* (activity), and because the interpreters are the member of the temple who has learned the book *Bhagavad Gita* for some years, help them to understand the English text uttered by the presenters of the class of *Bhagavad Gita*, so they can deliver the oral translation in an accurate translation to the audiences.

Besides, the interpreters' cross-culture understanding of both SL and TL cultures also play an important role in making the process of interpreting running smoothly. Even though they are non-linguists, but they always associate with other members of the temple who are from western countries and they use English as the means of communication that make their English improved including their knowledge about the culture.

4. Conclusion

Interpreting (oral translation) covers three basic modus: liaison, consecutive, and simultaneous. Concerning interpreting modus above, consecutive interpreting is applied in *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Sri Jaganath Gaurangga Temple in Denpasar. In interpreting, the transfer of the SL message to the TL message is conducted immediately by the interpreters after the SL is delivered (almost at the same time).

After interviewing the interpreters, there are two factors that affect the perfection of their interpreting in *Bhagavad Gita* classes at Sri Sri Jaganath Gaurangga temple in Denpasar, namely the interpreters' background knowledge of the text being interpreted that's to say the *Bhagavad Gita* and their cross-culture understanding of both SL and TL cultures.

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Statement of authorship

The author(s) have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The author(s) have approved the final article.

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